

● Our National Health Service is now under major attack. Just as we heard that the Whittington Hospital A&E is threatened with closure, it emerges that hundreds of jobs are threatened at the Royal Free. March to defend the Whittington. If there is money for bankers' bonuses, Trident and Afghanistan, there is money to keep our hospitals open. Assemble 12 noon, 27 February, outside Highbury & Islington tube.

Newsletter of the Camden Unison Branch

CAMDEN EYE



Number 17 ● February 2010

Council budget: calm before the storm



The Deputy Director of Finance, Marion Kelly, and Mike

Cooke, the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Organisation Development, offered senior branch officers cold comfort but few surprises in a late January briefing on the 2010-11 Camden budget.

In essence we received confirmation that next year's budget was set in February 2009. The key elements remain:

- Some £8.3 million in so-called efficiency savings – management claims some £4.3 million were achieved this financial year now ending
- Another year of Council Tax frozen at 2008-09 levels
- A sum earmarked for a 1% (!) across the board pay 'increase' for staff on National Joint Council terms and conditions. This will remain in the Budget despite the national employers' body announcing a pay freeze in response to the joint union claim
- The projected budget gap for the next three financial years from 2011-12 onwards remains officially at £59 million, though Marion Kelly conceded that this figure is of 'spurious accuracy'. In short, the gap could be somewhat lower or significantly higher.

Asked about the Council's current reserves, which some reports suggest exceed £100 million, Marion Kelly said this figure was misleading since more than 85% of the total is already earmarked for investment in capital projects. The biggest chunk is £45-50 million towards the Decent Homes Standard, with another £14 million set aside to insure against various liabilities. She reported that the 'true' reserves are in the vicinity of £12 million on top of which there is a corporate contingencies fund of some £2.5 million.

Due to a separate change in the funding formula nationally for schools, there could be a 10% cut in the allocation to Camden LEA schools over the coming three years. Hugo Pierre (CSF co-convenor) and I have had initial discussions with the National Union of Teachers' representatives toward a joint union campaign to oppose any cuts.

The briefing also touched on the possibility of an 'Emergency Budget' if the Conservatives form the next Government. Marion Kelly responded that officers in Finance were considering the implications of a number of possible outcomes if central Government made substantial changes to the last Alastair Darling Budget. Since our meeting David Cameron has started to play down the prospect of immediate and hefty post-election cuts. After all the Tories want to be elected first!

There are a number of troubling issues associated with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), but these are also distinct from the overall budget. For example, rents for Council tenants will rise by 1.4% while Council Tax is frozen and hostel service charges will rise by 2.5%. The management justification on this score is that the HRA is

completely separate from the main budget and strictly ring fenced, so that if there were no rent increases and service charges there would have to be cuts in services provided to tenants since the Council cannot subsidise the HRA from its general fund. While we should not accept this state of affairs, it is the official line of explanation for bumping up the cost of being a council tenant even as the real level of Council Tax falls for owner-occupiers.

So we do not face a full frontal attack on jobs and service provision come April. This is not, however, a lasting reprieve. Regardless of the outcome of either the local or general elections, we need to prepare for an unprecedented scale of attack on our jobs, our conditions and pensions.

■ Meanwhile, the branch will be supporting 2 lobbies at Camden Town Hall outside the Council's budget setting council meeting on Monday 1st March.

■ The 'No Sell-Offs' campaign, which is fighting the continued sale of Camden's residential street properties, and

■ The campaign to halt the Council's very steep - £170,000 - cut in funding for UK Online services.

George Binette
Camden UNISON Branch
Secretary

Camden UNISON

Annual General Meeting

Council Chamber, Camden Town Hall
Tuesday 9 March at 4pm

Time off has been agreed.

Agenda will include:

Annual Report

Report on elections for stewards & branch officers

Discussion on UNISON General Secretary election

Further details will be circulated via stewards

Tenants say no sell-offs



Tenants are challenging Camden Council's sell offs of council

homes in a formal letter to the District Auditor who oversees the Council's use of public funds. On behalf of the No Sell Offs campaign, Camden Tenants' Fed chair has written to District Auditor Philip Johnstone to say: 'We are concerned that Camden Council is selling off much needed council homes irresponsibly, without due regard to ensuring the best financial management of public resources, including human and financial impact on those on the waiting list and in dire need of these homes.'

Local MPs and councillors are being pressed to contact Housing Minister John Healey directly to clarify the contradictory messages on more funding for council

housing to Camden from Government. The Minister was reported to be 'looking very hard' at the Camden sell-offs last September.

We want to know:

- what was the review outcome
- whether Camden's current sell off of council housing is good value for money
- should Camden council be influenced by the opposition of Camden tenants to this policy
- is there the prospect of more funding for Camden to improve homes without raising funds through sell offs?

Pressure on government is beginning to show. In the latest round of funding for new council housing, Camden has been awarded £3.6 million to help fund 63 new council homes. These will replace homes demolished/refurbished on the Holly Lodge and Chester Balmore estates.

In Camden and nationally

the determined united campaign against privatisation and for direct investment in council housing without strings attached, and the crisis in the private housing market, has forced government to shift policy. But with over 18,000 on the housing waiting list in Camden – and nearly 2 million nationally – these new homes are a drop in the ocean. It is madness for Camden to continue selling off good quality homes at less than their value, while secure council housing is so desperately needed.

Camden No Sell Offs campaigners will be at the Defend Council Housing conference 19 March at the TUC conference centre, Great Russell St, with tenants, trade unions, councillors and MPs from across Britain. For details and to book a place see www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Eileen Short

Evidence presented to challenge Camden's sell off policy includes:

- adapted disabled properties in purpose-built council homes which are less than 20 years old and in good repair earmarked for auction;
- a flat in Holborn sold after only one bid for £180,000. Surveyor's evidence showing that 'far from needing extensive work' the flat in Nigel House needed only around £10,000 to make it suitable for use;
- a block of three flats in Russell Nurseries Estate, sold together for £560,000 in August 09, and back on the market at £250,000 each by September 09;
- National Association of Valuers and Auctioneers say auction properties sell for up to 20 per cent less than normal sale price, and 400 homes sold by London councils raised around £32 million less than the potential value;
- Camden's 30 homes sold by McHugh and Co Auctioneers in 2007-9 raised £22,416,000. To raise £243 million for improvement work to other homes Camden plan to sell hundreds of much-needed homes.

The letter also challenges Camden's mandate for the Sell Offs. All the formal tenant consultative bodies and focus groups rejected sell offs to pay for improvement work to other homes (see this page). Kathy O'Donoghue was moved out of the home she grew up in, temporarily while repairs were done. Now her home is being sold off. She says 'I was conned, just as the people of Camden are being conned out of what belongs to us. The council could have led a campaign with tenants to demand help from Government and the London Mayor to pay for decent homes in Camden. Instead they have let government off the hook.'

Picture: Phil Lewis



Special branch meeting 10 December 2009

Nearly 200 members packed into the council chamber for the special branch meeting. George Binette, Branch Secretary, thanked those involved in the lengthy negotiations on pay and grading. Copies of the Framework agreement which would affect about 600-700 members were distributed. After discussion the meeting voted to approve progress so far. George then reported on detrimental changes to the redundancy/compensation and pay protection schemes which the branch could not support. Barry Walden then spoke on cuts to trade union facility time and how this would affect members. HASCO Co-convenor, Mandy Berger's union facility time was restored following unanimous support at the meeting. John Boyle successfully moved support for the campaign to reverse cuts of £170,000 to UK Online centres from April 2010. Finally a motion, moved by the branch secretary, on the financial crisis and opposing cuts was passed unanimously.

We're still fighting

Camden UNISON Temporary Accommodation Group (TAG) stewards, together with Homeless Households Support Services reps and Assistant Branch Secretary Steve Sincock, continue to fight against the proposed TAG homeless hostel closures and demolitions.

We're working with local agencies such as Community Mental Health Teams and alcohol, substance misuse and drug agencies to get the message out that local partners are not in favour of the draconian cuts and closures planned despite misleading management

claims. Shutting the three largest single persons' hostels will submerge services already struggling to cope, and many service users will find themselves isolated with little support in private accommodation far from the services they need to survive.

Outreach and floating support services are being cut even as hostel closure plans are finalised. Already one ex-hostel resident, earlier featured in Camden's 'consultation' documents as being 'in favour' of the changes, has tragically been found dead inside her private rented flat, having lain there undiscovered for a week.

UNISON will continue to work with local MP Frank Dobson and community 'no-to-sell-offs' groups to highlight these disastrous and dangerous proposals. Legal challenges are also being explored, and the risk to members' jobs cannot be overstated: there are serious potential job losses at all but senior levels of the Temporary Accommodation Group, and UNISON will be there to fight for both staff and service users at this the most critical of times for Camden's once renowned homeless service.

Martin Cornish
Senior Hostels' Steward & Safety Rep

EYE VIEW

Solidarity is the key

Those in the private sector responsible for the financial crisis have gone unpunished. However, punitive cuts are now being made in the public sector. Both the Whittington and Royal Free hospitals face cuts and redundancies and there are more threats to privatise the NHS. Major job losses are threatened at SOAS, University College, London and Kings.

The lesson from the successful fightbacks in 2009 is for there to be strong opposition from the unions and the community they serve. Solidarity is key. The level of cuts is so high it will be difficult, if not impossible, to fight in isolation and win. We have to support one another.

Defeating the Nazis

BNP Leader, Nick Griffin, is standing in Barking and Dagenham for the general election. It is essential that he is not elected as that will boost the confidence of racists everywhere. Unite against Fascism has been holding days of action in the constituency with mass leafleting against the BNP. These have gone very well and are boosting the confidence of the majority of residents who are opposed to racism. Defeating the fascists is definitely a trade union issue as these people seek to divide us on race. Contact Barry. Walden@camden.gov.uk if you would like to help.

More at:
<http://www.uaf.org.uk>

ATM Saved

I'm hearing that the decision to remove the ATM from the Old Town Hall is under review and that the Finance directorate has signed a one year extension on the contract with the Co-operative bank to keep the ATM here a little longer. This is all to be confirmed of course but if this is the case then this is certainly excellent news.

I must admit that I was a little overwhelmed with the fantastic response of staff and members of the local community who had signed the petition to keep the ATM at the town hall. We had passed our initial target of 200 signatures within a few days of starting the petition and ended up with over 600 eagerly placed signatures in two short weeks.

I don't see myself as some sort of ATM champion, indeed I do not take any joy out of going head to head with the Finance directorate. I simply wanted to help raise concerns about the removal of a cash machine that had huge benefits in terms of its location - not to mention the 'no charge' facility to staff, the community and visitors to the Old Town Hall. Together we all helped to save the ATM.

A big, huge thank you to all who had voiced their concerns and objections by way of adding your names to the petition. This would not have been possible without your help and support.

Well done to all of you.
Stephen Massicott
UNISON member,
Finance Directorate

Surprise election for General Secretary

UNISON's National Executive Committee has agreed that there will be an election for the post of general secretary in 2010. This is the most powerful full-time position in UNISON.

The current general secretary Dave Prentis was entitled to remain in office until May 2013. He intends to stand in the election.

Nominations for the post opened on February 4 and will close on April 1. Branch officers are investigating whether the AGM on March 9 can be used as a nominating meeting with all those seeking our support invited to come and speak.

The ballot will start on May 17 and end on June 11. The election result will be announced on June 22.

Champers for the managers, Argos points for the staff



Camden has awarded NSL Services Group a six year Parking contract starting in April and valued over £44m with the opportunity to renew for a further 2 years.

Along with two other companies they bid for the new one, and from the November Executive meeting it was clear that NSL had won the contract. Their base managers toasted success with champagne.

But the celebrations were not shared with the parking wardens – now known as Civil Enforcement Officers. They refused to contribute towards a Christmas party for their on-street staff to celebrate the successful re-tender. Instead they agreed to award staff Christmas Argos points! (CEOs are awarded Argos points for good performance.)

When the new contract starts CEOs will have additional duties:

- passing a City and Guilds Vocationally Recognised Qualification Level 2 Award

for Parking

- an ambassadorial role in helping the public and
- being the 'eyes and ears' of the Council on the streets.

Camden UNISON has submitted a 2010/11 pay claim to NSL to get the CEOs due rewards for these additional duties. Our demands include:

- remuneration for the additional CEO duties – an increase of £1 an hour to £8.85. This will go part way to achieving parity with CEOs on other NSL contracts (Walthamstow CEOs earn £9.97 and Ealing £9.31)

- increase in annual leave (currently 20 days plus bank holidays)

- a shorter working week (currently 42.5 hours)

- enhancement for out of hours and weekend working
- sharing the success – this contract is worth around £55 million over the next six years. NSL's highest paid director was paid £464,000 in 2008.

The CEOs have opportunities to make up their wages through a £250 a quarter

'at work bonus' and through accumulating Argos points. But as one CEO said 'you only need so many kettles – a decent rate of pay is the important thing'.

This is a 'third generation' contract, with only a handful of CEOs out of about 250, still on Camden Council terms and conditions at scale 5. Staff on NSL terms and conditions are paid about £10,000 less.

It is a scandal that they do exactly the same job but there is such a huge gap in pay and terms and conditions. Nationally UNISON has lobbied the Government for legislation to ensure that all those who start work after the TUPE transfer are recruited on the same terms and conditions as their TUPE protected colleagues. The 2005 Workforce Code of Practice was one attempt by the Government to address this issue. But this had not worked. The decision Camden took on this contract shows how public sector bodies can get around such codes. Camden said that new staff joining the

contract would have to be recruited on terms and conditions equivalent to Camden's and the existing staff would remain on existing conditions 'hence a two tier workforce would remain'.

Probably crucial to the decision was Camden's calculation that applying the code would have cost £12.37 million over the contract life with 'no demonstrable value added'. When reaching this conclusion it was a shame that Camden did not take in to account the 'demonstrable value' that decent terms and conditions would have in securing high quality staff to deliver the service and pay at a sufficient level to recruit, motivate and retain high quality staff.

Our pay claim is a small step towards eradicating the two tier workforce. Success in this will show UNISON's determination to represent members working in the private sector on collective bargaining issues.

Sarah Friday
Camden UNISON
Branch Officer

Solidarity Socks it to Sodexo



Ancillary staff braved the bitter cold and snow for two days in early

January to mount lively picket lines outside hospitals run by North Devon NHS Hospitals Trust.

Though working in NHS facilities, the UNISON members are actually employed by the giant French-based multinational Sodexo. For five years Sodexo had the catering contract for the Camden Town Hall canteen where most staff still re-

ceive just a few pence more than the national minimum wage (now £5.81 an hour).

The strike came after several months of campaigning by UNISON branch activists, who had effectively doubled the branch's membership among Sodexo staff to nearly 200 in the run-up to the action.

Sodexo had failed to honour an agreement that had been in place for more than three years, which should have narrowed the gap between those working for private companies and

those directly employed by the NHS. Sick pay and annual leave arrangements were far worse for the Sodexo workers.

Further strikes were due to take place when a meeting between UNISON, the NHS Trust and Sodexo management under ACAS supervision resulted in a surprise announcement in January. As branch chair Mark Harper put it, 'We were amazed. We were all geared for more action when Sodexo conceded all our demands.' As a result

some of the workers will gain as much as £3,500 in back pay.

UNISON gave the dispute a high profile, because Sodexo is one of three big firms in the catering and cleaning sectors which UNISON has targeted in a joint campaign with the US-based Service Employees International Union.

Camden branch officers agreed a message of support along with a £100 donation to the strike fund.

George Binette
Branch Secretary

Whose land is it anyway?

The powerful UKCMRI consortium (the Wellcome Institute, the Medical Research Council and University College London) want to develop the land behind the British Library as a medical research centre. **Candy Udwin** from the Somers Town People's Forum writes on why they should be opposed

■ The UKCMRI have finally gone public. Their plans include:

- no housing despite the planning brief.
- a small resource for the local Somers Town community – a room that can be used by local schools.
- no public access because of the virus research and animal testing.

Camden council have stated they will expect any developer to stick to the planning brief that at least half the site should be used for housing and community facilities.

UKCMRI claim they can get away without doing this because the proposed laboratories are of 'national strategic importance.'

The proposed redevelopment could be carried out far more safely and cheaply on the existing much larger site at Mill Hill in Barnet.

The Wellcome Institute has links with the large drug companies. The Medical Research Council and University College London are meant to be bodies that act in the public interest. We should make sure our needs are not ignored. Camden Council is elected to represent local people. We need to make it clear to councillors they should stick to the planning brief and ensure that local people are not sold short.

We will be circulating a petition and raising our concerns at the Camden Redevelopment Control Forum.

Finance review — a degree of success

■ On 31st January the Finance Review came to an end. It has taken over 2 years and the new structure has changed just over 150 posts, of which nearly all were appointed from existing staff.

In the final stages 131 people were to be assessed into new positions. 35 of the 131 were promoted, 80 remained as they were and 16 (most of whom were on overlapping grades) were assessed into lower grades. Two staff have reduced salary protection because they were already protected from a previous regrading. UNISON is pursuing this matter.

The Finance review began in late 2007, and the consultation process which has been ongoing since last summer, only became meaningful in September. From this point there were weekly meetings to discuss issues, with four union representatives (all UNISON) as part of the process.

The review was a complete redesign of the service with most finance functions being placed under a new structure at the centre. This was a long and difficult process for all staff, who were fearful for their jobs and unclear about how the new structures would work.

Communication from the centre and the methods of telling staff left a lot to be desired and did not allay the stress that staff felt. We did press for greater communication all the way through the process.

The main concern, as with all reviews, was job losses and the worry was that management would use the assessment process to deselect staff. This looked especially ominous as the new structure considerably reduced the number of PO1, SO1 and SO2 posts which a large number of staff were on.

It was a hard process. Most staff had to fill in a submission and many were

interviewed. However, redundancies were brought down to a minimum. Considering how many people were involved and remained in scope in the final rounds, it should be seen as a success for UNISON that such a small number of staff remain at risk

Along with the branch secretary there were stewards from HASC and CSF in the consultation team. While we were fighting for all members, members from these directorates did benefit from having closer contact with a UNISON representative and could bring up their concerns with and no one in these directorates was made redundant. During the course of the process we also recruited many new members.

Nick Goodes, HASC Steward, on behalf of the negotiating team which also included Helen Coram, Hugo Pierre and George Binette.

Cool response to 'Hot Desking'

■ At the January Corporate Health & Safety committee UNISON asked to see the management questionnaire and survey results on 'hot desking'.

Management say the purpose of the survey is to target follow up activity where it's needed most, however, there are some gaps in the survey that we are asking Camden to address.

Only those that have recently moved over to 'hot desking' have been surveyed. Interestingly one Bidborough House section rated the availability of hot desks, phones, IT support and office furniture at over

90% and the general office working environment at 87%. However, asked about 'hot desking' only 32% said they liked it or liked it very much. 45% were neutral and 23% responded 'dislike to strongly dislike'. In addition to questions on the office environment there were others on the impact of 'hot desking' on team working, morale and stress levels it would have been easier to work out why so few people said they liked 'hot desking'.

A significant number of members like some elements of flexible working such as the ability to work compressed weeks or work from home. So you might

recommend flexible working, even if you hated 'hot desking'.

The average figures quoted for 'To what extent do you like 'hot desking' were 'like very much to like', 33%; 'neutral' 38% and 'dislike to strongly dislike' 30%.

All office based Health and Safety representatives have copies of the survey and UNISON would welcome feedback on this and 'hot desking in general.

Are there additional questions that should be asked? (More surveys are planned.)

● Please email Sarah Friday with your views: sarah.friday@camden.gov.uk

Camden Unite Against Fascism

The first meeting for Camden Unite Against Fascism held on the 26th January was a success. It was good to be able to report that the Gloucester Arms pub in Kentish Town, where the Hungarian neo-fascist Jobbik party met in 2009 despite protests, has now closed.

All was not good news however. Speaker Paul Sillett from Unite Against Fascism described the English Defence League (EDL) rampage in Stoke-on-Trent on the 23rd January, where 1,500 EDL members and supporters enacted what can only be described as a pogrom through the Hanley area of the city. Mosques, pubs and businesses were smashed up and residents who tried to show their disapproval of the EDL's actions were threatened with assault.

The confidence that the EDL has shown in letting the public see their true colours stems from the continued campaign by the BNP to run for council and parliamentary seats later this year and gain platforms for their vile racist views. The more mainstream and respectable the BNP portray themselves the greater will be the confidence of the thuggish EDL to take to the streets to attack and intimidate everyone.

UAF is organising opposition to the increasingly frequent EDL marches. It is also working with local anti-BNP activists and holding days of action in Barking and Dagenham where BNP leader Nick Griffin will be standing in the General Election.

More on anti – BNP and EDL activities at: www.uaf.org.uk

● Camden UNISON agreed to send delegates to the UAF 2010 national conference on 13 February.

Black members together

Camden Black Workers Group held a pre-Xmas *Meet and Greet* in the Council Chamber. The event was intended to bring older members together and to inform newer and potential members about the group.

I spoke about the history of the Black Workers Group in Camden which goes back to 1982 and has spawned many activists that have gone on to become important figures in local and national high profile campaigns.

The core of the group's work was still based around representation of black staff involved in workplace issues such as restructuring, grievances and disciplinaries, staff training, etc. However, I also emphasised the track record of CBWG in developing Camden's award-winning Black History Season programme. He showed slides of the 2008 visit to Acland Burghley and Parliament Hill Schools of the 1968 Black Olympian

Tommy Smith.

Representation

Black staff in Camden often have to call on the group for representation in the event of grievances and other issues that come up during their employment

Olivia Mensah (Culture and Environment) mentioned the disproportionate number of black staff amongst those made redundant over the last year.

With these kinds of trends developing the current attack on trade union facility time has implications for the ability of TU officers to properly represent black staff and give them access to the kind of support that they need.

Monica Morris Jarra (Equality Officer) mentioned the poor record on matters of race equality. She mentioned the Challenging Racism and Discrimination project that CBWG and UNISON are jointly promoting where the council is re-

quired to provide monitoring data, conduct Equality Impact Assessments and take action to address inequalities.

The future

It was felt that younger staff might not relate to the use of the term 'black' and that we should not assume that they have the same political understanding of black self-organisation and its relationship to the trade union movement.

Others also felt that maybe it was time for the group to 're-brand' if it is going to continue to meet the challenge of attracting a new layer of activists.

If you are interested in becoming a member of CBWG or would like to contact any of the Executive members I mentioned in the article, please make contact by e-mail cbwg@camden.gov.uk or call 0207 974 1683

Kunle Olulode
Chair CBWG

Library staff voice concerns

Library Stewards chaired an all members meeting to discuss issues and concerns arising from the on-going Grow Your Library ring fencing procedure. The meeting, held on 26th January in the Council Chamber, sought to address some of the confusion and anxiety felt by UNISON members.

Councillor Flick Rea had asked for staff redundancies to be minimised at last October's council meeting when she approved the Grow Your Library restructuring of services. But for members of staff dropping from one ring fence into the one below the possibility of compulsory redundancies has become more acute as not all vacancies have been

filled internally.

The meeting had a good and spirited attendance despite having to be held at 8am as management refused to agree to a meeting during work time

Stewards sought to make members aware of the problems they are having in getting replies to their emails querying the ring fencing process and its application. Members at the meeting raised their concerns about their representative union being left out of the consultation process, as well as individual concerns relating to confusion over their individual situations.

To that end UNISON called on management to honour their commitment in the 'Growing Your Library' re-

port to 'mitigate against compulsory redundancies', to fill all new posts in the structure internally and open up the offer of Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy to more staff. UNISON also called for more transparency with regard to the treatment of staff that are on temporary contracts, and for management to provide staff with more details of selection methods, to amend out of date timetable documents and make efforts to keep staff updated through the internal Team Briefing.

The meeting concluded with a discussion over the possibility of industrial action and non co-operation with the process if consultation is unsatisfactory.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL EVENT

Lou Hart, Director of Camden LGBT Forum spoke about the persecution of Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgendered people under the Nazi regime. From 1933 to 1945 100,000 gays were arrested under the notorious sections 175 and 175a, and 5-15,000 were sent to the concentration camps or incarcerated elsewhere. In the camps they were worked to death and sexually abused.

The techniques of oppression used were to attack them as paedophiles; denounce them as sterile and degenerate, lazy and work-shy; encourage vigilantes; isolate them by closing down meeting places and banning newspapers; encouraging betrayal; torture; and victimisation of those who spoke out.

After the war ended many of these concepts were not challenged. Gay men liberated from the camps were then re-arrested for being homosexuals. In Norway 2,500 men and 4,000 in the US were given lobotomies to deter non-heterosexual tendencies.

Coming to the present day there are increasing movements to dehumanise LGBT people. Pride marches are attacked in Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. Uganda is considering an anti-homosexuality Bill with a penalty of life imprisonment.

Against this trend there

have been campaigns on human rights and in 2008 there were 66 countries where being an LGBT person is not a criminal offence.

Susan Pollack spoke of her entire family being murdered in Auschwitz. Anti-Semitic laws were passed in 1922. She was born in Hungary in 1930. When it became part of the Axis powers the Jewish school was closed down. In the school they were moved to they were not allowed to play with the other children. In the classroom two empty rows separated them from their class mates.

The 28 Jewish families in the village were called to a meeting about a re-settlement programme. There her father was beaten up and herded into a truck. She was resettled in a holding camp the next day. Not realising what would happen she carried a small sewing machine which she thought would be useful when she

arrived at the final destination.

The cattle train that transported them to Auschwitz was so hot they were relieved when the doors opened. Her mother, in her 40s, was immediately selected and gassed. Susan had her hair shaven. She was selected by Dr Mengeles, notorious for his experiments.

Eventually they were marched to Belsen. She was in the camp for one year before it was liberated by the British. No one had any energy to respond. They had been totally de-humanised.

The fight back to normality took time. Her therapy was in voluntary work and in speaking about her experience. 450,000 Hungarians perished.

● *Unite Against Fascism's stall attracted much interest with people buying pamphlets and taking leaflets away.*



Why did you stand as a steward?

Joel Morgan, UNISON steward/Primary School Teaching Assistant, gives his reasons

■ I get along very well with all members of support staff and so signed up as a Joint Shop Steward. *What gives you satisfaction?*

Knowing that members are aware of their rights. This has empowered them to be able to make choices in the work place and in so doing created a more bonded working environment.

What difference does it make?

Members know they can talk over issues with their shop steward(s) and get an answer quickly that helps them make 'their' informed and supported decision.

Why should people stand?

UNISON gives a workforce a voice and it's rewarding to know you helped your members, often in times of great stress for them to get an outcome that suits both them and the employer.

Nomination forms for stewards are available from convenors or the branch office. Ring 020 7974 1633 or email paul.england@camden.gov.uk

The third Campaign Against Climate Change TU conference takes place on Saturday 13 March at South Camden Community School. Organised in a 'teach-in' format, there will be plenty of time for delegates to join in the discussions. There will also be sessions on Climate Jobs, Organising at Work, the Climate Emergency Demands and The International movement post Copenhagen. More at: <http://cacctu.wordpress.com/> and <http://www.campaigncc.org> Camden UNISON has agreed to pay for 3 delegates. If you are interested please contact pete.ainsley@camden.gov.uk

Haiti

UNISON's national executive council voted to donate £10,000 to the Haiti earthquake appeal and called on branches to make donations via the TUC Aid appeal. As part of TUC Aid's Haiti Earthquake Appeal, Philosophy Football has created an 'Aidez Haiti' t-shirt. All profits will go to the appeal launched by the TUC towards emergency relief and long-term rehabilitation of the victims of the earthquake. The Philosophy Football Aidez Haiti shirt is available from http://www.philosophy-football.com/view_item.php?pid=570

There's strength in numbers:

JOIN CAMDEN UNISON

With over 3,500 members Camden UNISON is the largest union in the council. If you are worried about your job in a re-structure, stressed by your workload, having trouble with your manager, worried about outsourcing, have health and safety concerns or are anxious that there is a decent pay settlement this year then you are better off in the union than without. Fight together with others – don't struggle alone. Phone the branch office on 020 7974 1633 or email: paul.England@camden.gov.uk More information at: www.unison.org.uk

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The views expressed in
this newsletter are not
necessarily the views of
Camden UNISON, but
the branch will defend
the right of members to
express those views.

UNISON
the public service union

Defend Whittington Hospital

Since the *Camden New Journal* uncovered proposals last November that NHS bosses were planning to close the Accident & Emergency (A&E) department at the Whittington Hospital, residents of North London have come together in shock, outrage and action. The leaked letter from NHS Islington Chief Executive Rachael Tyndale revealed that the Whittington, as part of the current London-wide hospital reconfigurations, would lose some or all of its A&E function. As doctors have pointed out, this means the hospital would also lose other vital services which are fed by the A&E department such as the acute Paediatrics unit. The closure of the A&E department would leave the boroughs of Islington and Haringey without any A&E response, and would make a mockery of the £30 million redevelopment of the hospital in recent years. The 80,000 people that use the Whittington's A&E department each year would be redirected to UCH or the Royal Free, putting immense pressure on those hospitals, which are themselves facing cuts in services.

As well as sustained local and national media interest, there have been 2 packed public meetings at which MPs, led by Jeremy Corbyn, along with local residents



Picture: Shirley Franklin

have directed their anger and outrage at Rachael Tyndale over the secretive and damaging plans.

Thousands have signed petitions and *Islington Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee* has made its concerns known. Despite such opposition no-one has received assurances that the A&E will be spared.

Defend the Whittington Hospital Coalition [DWHC] has been set up to bring local residents, political parties, trade unions and community and religious groups together to fight the proposals, and also to oppose the privatisation and closure of any hospitals services in North London.

The proposals for the Whittington are just part of larger reconfigurations taking place under the banner of *Healthcare for London*.

These plans involve taking more care into the community and creating specialist

centres, to the detriment of well run and vital A&E services across the capital. Currently six A&E departments are under threat. Although these plans were under way before the recession began to bite, NHS bosses are now using the projected spending squeeze to accelerate closures and the involvement of private companies to make 'efficiency savings'.

DWHC has called a demonstration on Saturday 27 February, assembling 12 noon Highbury fields, to give people the chance to show NHS bosses and the government we will not stand for the closure of the Whittington, or any other local health service.

● Donations, volunteers and stewards are much needed for the demonstration: defendwhittington@googlemail.com
<http://dwhc.org.uk/>

Sarah Mills

A conference for the right to work

Nearly 900 people packed the Right to Work Conference of resistance and solidarity in Manchester Central Hall on Saturday 30 January

Ian Allinson from Unite Fujitsu opened up the conference. Fujitsu had doubled its profits in 2009 but then attacked jobs, pensions and pay. Strike action

had so far forced them to reduce job losses from 1200 to 900, hold off pensions for a year and offer a 5% pay increase.

The conference was an opportunity to hear from those fighting back: from Vestas to Leeds bin workers, from migrants to South Wales' signallers.

A steering committee was

elected and a statement of intent agreed. Essentially it was a start to building networks of resistance against the onslaught on jobs and the welfare state that is gathering pace.

● See the videos of the conference at <http://sites.google.com/site/righttoworkconference/home>